SHORT STORIES

In Modern Lore.

A MAID'S WAY.

IT was a pretty bit of road. It climbed the hill to where a dainty white silhouette against the enkindled sky, for the hour was sunset, the season spring, a slip of a girl stood waiting, her face towards the brilliant west, dejection in every line of her sweet young body.

Williamson knew the silhouette—oh, how well he knew it!

As the smart trap came nearer he gave the reins to the groom and sprang to the ground.

"I came on purpose," the girl spoke half defiantly. "I wanted to tell you—. No," with a quick frown, not that——."

Williamson helped her into the trap and sent the groom on to the station.

"Well, he said at length, and sighed.

Since she had not come to tell him the one thing nothing else mattered very much.

He took out his watch and consulted it gravely; she leaned back as if she intended remaining indefinitely. It was a way she had. Perhaps other women were like that—he did not know. The whole sweep of his life had been away from women.

"Well," he said again. Unconsciously he opened the other lid of his watch.

The girl gave a quick, amazed little cry. She leaned forward. "Where did you get my picture?"

Williamson laughed. There wasn't much mirth in the laugh.

"Waldmere and I are old friends," he said. "When he asked me to the house party he inclosed this picture. I—that's why I came. House parties are not much in my line." He looked down at the picture with a wonderful softening of his rather stern young face.

"Did you think I was rich?" the girl asked, with a touch of suspicion in her voice.

Williamson hesitated.

"Did you want to marry me for my money?" This is fine scorn.

Williamson threw back his head and laughed—a burst of genuine merriment.

A line of harness spoiled the curves of the girls mouth.

"I must thank Mr. Waldmere for his interest in me," she said. Not only my picture, but my private affairs.

Williamson put up the match and turned his eyes full upon the girl.

"Dear child," he said, rich or poor, it does not matter a raindrop to me. I hesitated because the question had never been in my mind before. You may be rich—all of you here belong to a life of which I know but little. It seems empty and wearisome and vapid to me. I came because of the picture. It caught and overwhelmed me. I was horribly afraid after I got here—almost ready to turn and run for fear you would be disappointing. Women (his lips twitched boyishly) have never touched my life intimately—I didn't know they could hurt one so."

"Oh," said the girl, "how perfectly horrid I am! It's just that crazy people always think everybody else is crazy. I never went to a house party in my life. I'm as poor as a church mouse. I work in my uncle's office from morning until night for a bare pittance. Mumsie and I have to live on it, and we just hold our heads high and do it. But we are hungry sometimes—not really for bread," seeing the look on his face, "but for life's goodies."

"When I got the invitation here I bent every energy to come, and Mumsie helped me—we did almost go hungry then, but 'what o' the way to end—the end was a rich marriage. That's why I refused you last night. I will not starve and go shabby and go without all that makes life worth living," she broke out, with flashing eyes. "But," in sudden change from aggressiveness to appeal, "I don't want you to hate me. I slipped away from them all to beg you not to."

Oh, the strength in his face, in his voice, in the quiet hand that laid on hers.

"He asked me, too, last night—just after you did—he is so old—so old—I couldn't say yes just then—your eyes came between.—I—I beged for time."

Williamson's hand closed suddenly on the fingers that lay quiet under his.

"Why," he said, in a tone that for him settled the whole matter, "you love me."

"I'm doing to marry him," the girl said defiantly. "I'm going to leave the stuffy office forever, and the typewriter—I hate the typewriter. It makes my head ache—and my back—and I go home so tired, so tired, and the splendid faces in the big brass frames look down at me—there's nothing much in the big, empty room but the pictures—we've sold everything else to collectors of antique furniture—and they seem to say, "Poor little girl, poor little girl, we are sorry for you."

"Oh, now," Williamson said; there was a sudden mist in his eyes; we'll change all that. I'm glad you didn't say yes to the old fellow. I feel sorry for him, a fellow feeling; but it won't be as hard for him as if you had said yes."

They had reached the station, and he gave the horses to the groom, and as he guided her steps across the platform he put up her parasol to shield them from inquisitive eyes.

"But I'm going to say yes," she spoke stubbornly.

"You love me," he said.

"I do not." But her face was down cast, "I love myself. I love the things that he can give."

"There's but one thing, and you would want it so."

The train came in.

A sudden sternness had come into Williamson's young face. It love was not more to her than all else besides; if she could give him up for an old man's money—it would wrench his heart—but he would leave her. She wasn't the girl whose warm dark eyes looked from the picture in his watch. Awake from a beautiful dream, he would go back and take up his strenuous life. The train began to move out. It was a long train and they stood at the edge of the platform.

"Goodbye, I am going now," said Williamson; but he did not go.

He was going! He despised her! Going! The cars were passing swiftly now. Going—what were riches—what was anything without him? Going—and she couldn't tell him—she was choking so.

She clutched her hands wildly.

"Goodbye," he repeated. "Forget me."

The long train was almost past.

But her words came fast as April showers, "I want you without it all," she said "I want you if we must be poor. I'll tell him that he isn't available—rejected with thanks."

You have seen the sudden flash of sunlight on steel—then you have seen Williamson's face.

He swung up on the last coach, there wasn't time to do more, and stood there watching the flutter of her handkerchief until the train was lost around the curve.

"Why, Miss Livingston," said a voice at her elbow, as she crossed the platform to the trap, "I didn't know you were here, I believe I did hear it, though. At the Waldmere's party, aren't you? I've come down for the break-up. There was a girl on I know, so I didn't get off until the last minute. Just caught a glimpse of old Billy—never heard of him at a house party before.

The young fellow who called Mr. Williamson Billy put her in the trap and leaned over the wheel as though lota to go.

"Billy's got a romantic notion that he wants to be married for himself. I heard that he had the Waldmere's under promise not to mention his millions. Is it so? Why (laughing), don't you know?

"Billy owns his town, almost. He's president of the Lord knows how many mills. He's absolutely crazy over his factory people's comfort, and is forever building schools and churches for them—they fairly worship him."

"Now, I wonder," said the fellow who called Williamson Billy, as he stopped and struck a match on his shoe, his eyes following the departing trap; "I wonder what that look on her face meant?" He laughed. Guess she's refused him, not knowing."

It is a short journey from becoming a mother-in-law to a grandmother.

The married women, unmarried women, and unmarried men are making their usual preparations for summer vacations out of town.

When a man gets fatally sick, we have noticed that his family worries more about his temporal affairs than about his spiritual welfare.

The Kansas City Star charges this to a north Missouri editor who is addicted to verse: Johnnie had a mule; its hoofs were hard as rock. He used to hitch the donkey up and drive him 'around the block. One day the little mule he stopped and would not move a shoe so Johnnie got his pocket knife and stuck him just a few. Now when that donkey felt the knife he moved himself, you bet, and Johnnie, well, he also moved; they haven't found him yet.

Arizona exceeds in area the following ten states combined: Rhode Island Delaware, Connecticut, New Jersey, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maryland, West Virginia and South Carolina.

Dr. Charles F. Rand, who is accepted as being the first volunteer for the civil war, is still living in Washington, D. C. He was also the first soldier to win the congressional medal for honor for distinguished gallantry in action.

The raising of the instrument shelter of the weather bureau in New York from an elevation of 150 feet above the street to an elevatoin of 300 feet has caused an apparent lowering of the mean annual temperature of 21-2 degrees.

A salmon combination which has been formed at Victoria B. C., has concluded the purchase of forty canneries. A check for $1,250,000 was drawn for the purpose. An effort will be made to purchase all the British Columbia salmon canneries.